

## Sequestration hitting California hard: Henry Waxman

By Henry Waxman LA Daily News

Posted:

DailyNews.com

The painful automatic cuts in the \$85 billion federal budget sequester are beginning to hit the Los Angeles area and the nation. These arbitrary, across-the-board cuts to key domestic priorities and defense programs come at the worst possible time ""- just as the economy appears to be gaining momentum. March's disappointing job numbers are a reminder that the sequester represents a dangerous obstacle for our still-recovering economy.

How did we get here? During the negotiations in 2011 over the extension of the debt ceiling, Republicans and President Obama agreed on how to trim federal spending by \$900 billion over 10 years, but they could not agree on how to achieve an additional \$1.5 trillion in deficit reduction both sides thought necessary. The compromise was the creation of a congressional Super Committee that was supposed to find a way to achieve the additional deficit reduction through a balanced package of spending cuts and revenue raisers. To ensure the Super Committee would succeed, Congress also enacted automatic across-the-board spending cuts, known inside Washington as the sequester. The idea was that these automatic cuts would be so senseless and so painful that both sides would be left with no choice but to come together to craft an alternative.

It is a testimony to the dysfunction in Congress that the sequestration that was never supposed to happen has begun.

The cuts in California will be painful. They will mean billions of dollars in cuts to federal aid and place 225,000 California jobs at risk. And the longer the sequester goes on, the more we will feel the cuts ""- in all walks of life. The city of Los Angeles will lose an estimated \$100 million in federal financial assistance this year. The state will lose as much as \$10 billion.

Children will be among the hardest hit. The budget cuts to the Head Start program mean that more than 8,000 children in California will lose access to Head Start programs; 2,000 more disadvantaged and vulnerable children will lose access to high-quality child care. Fifteen thousand low-income families in Los Angeles will face cuts in rent subsidies that allow them to live in affordable housing.

Key education programs will be cut. The Los Angeles Unified School District will lose about \$37 million in federal aid. Statewide, almost \$100 million in cuts to primary and secondary schools will place 1,210 teachers and teacher's aide jobs at risk.

Our colleges will also be hurt. UC researchers will lose more than \$335 million in federal support in 2013, and even more in future years. Nearly 80,000 UC students could face higher bills next year because of cuts in Pell Grants; more than 13,000 low-income students in the state will lose access to financial aid and work-study jobs.

Public health risks will increase; cuts to vaccine program will mean that more than 15,000 children in California will not be receive vaccines for diseases like mumps, measles, rubella, tetanus, and

whooping cough; the state will lose tens of millions of dollars in funds for substance abuse programs, AIDS prevention, and preparation for public health emergencies.

And these are just the cuts on the domestic side. Department of Defense cuts will result in furloughs of almost three weeks for approximately 1,650 employees at the Los Angeles Air Force Base. The base is the hub of the Southern California aerospace and defense industries, and supports hundreds of contractors and subcontractors, including the Aerospace Corporation, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, and Boeing. Additional cuts to the base will cause a significant ripple effect throughout this industry. Statewide, the defense industry in California will be hit by \$3.2 billion in cuts that could eliminate more than 135,000 jobs.

As your representative in Congress, I have an obligation to put partisanship aside and make budget decisions that reflect the priorities of the American people. President Obama has offered to work with Congress on a comprehensive plan to reduce the debt, create a fairer tax system, and rebuild the middle class, all of which are necessary to strengthen the economy and maintain our ability to compete. Democrats have introduced legislation in Congress that takes such a balanced approach, but Republicans leaders have refused to even allow this legislation to come up for a vote. They seem to have taken the position that no matter how harmful the cuts to California and the rest of the nation, enduring these cuts is preferable to closing even the most egregious corporate tax loopholes.

The reality is that the sequester's budget cuts will harm millions of Californians. That's why I am calling on my colleagues to put partisanship aside and find a balanced, bipartisan way to end them.

Henry Waxman represents the 33rd district in the U.S. House of Representatives.

---

*Copyright ©2010 Los Angeles Newspaper Group.*